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President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of H.E. Mr. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury, President of the forty-first session of the General Assembly

The President: Before we take up the item on our agenda this morning, it is my sad duty to inform members of the Assembly of the death of His Excellency Mr. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury of Bangladesh this past Tuesday.

Mr. Choudhury was President of the forty-first session of the General Assembly in 1986. In addition, during his long and very distinguished diplomatic career, he served as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh from 1985 to 1988 as well as Ambassador of Bangladesh to various countries. He represented his country at a large number of international conferences, including United Nations conferences and other meetings. A member of the Parliament of Bangladesh for several years, at the time of his death he was the Speaker of the National Assembly. A skilful diplomat and negotiator, he will be remembered for his devotion to his country and to the ideals and principles of the United Nations.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I should like to convey our deepest condolences to the Government and the people of Bangladesh and to the bereaved family of Mr. Choudhury.

I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The President: I give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: On behalf of the Secretary-General and of all the members of the Secretariat, I join you, Sir, in expressing my sincere condolences on the death of His Excellency Mr. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury. Our thoughts today go to his family and to the Government and people of Bangladesh.

Mr. Choudhury was not only a wonderful envoy for his country and a fine Speaker of his country's Parliament; he was also a world citizen and a veteran of world diplomacy. During a long and distinguished career that began before the birth of the State of Bangladesh, he not only witnessed history being made, he took part in making it happen. He represented his country with devotion and served at the United Nations with distinction.

At a challenging time in the life of this Organization, we were privileged to have him as the President of the forty-first session of the General Assembly. Later in his life, he understood well the paramount challenge facing the international community at the start of the twenty-first century: the need to put people at the centre of everything we do.

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Only two years ago, in a speech to Asian parliamentarians, he summed it up eloquently:

> "Our political commitment is certainly important, but even more so is the demand of our citizens for peace in the heart of the common man in the villages and in the cities."

On behalf of the United Nations, allow me to join him in that appeal and to give thanks for his contribution in making it heard far and wide.

The President: I call on the representative of Rwanda, who will speak on behalf of the African States.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda) (*spoke in French*): It was with deep sadness and great emotion that the members of the Group of African States learned of the death of the President of the National Assembly of Bangladesh, the late Mr. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury.

It is not only Bangladesh that has just lost a man of courage and talent; it is all of us, the members of the international community whom he served, in particular in 1986 and 1987, when he was President of the General Assembly.

Since then, that very close partnership between him — a former President of the General Assembly — and the United Nations has become a partnership between Bangladesh and the United Nations, through the United Nations peacekeeping forces provided by Bangladesh, inter alia, in Africa, in Rwanda in 1993, 1994 and 1995, and today in Sierra Leone.

The country of the former President of the General Assembly has risked, and is risking, the lives of its sons and daughters — its soldiers — who are very far away from home in Africa — in Rwanda and in Sierra Leone. Its objective is not to serve Bangladesh's own agenda as an individual country, but to help to achieve the lofty goal of the United Nations: peace among men and among nations. The African Group thanks Bangladesh wholeheartedly.

In conclusion, the African Group would like to pay a heartfelt tribute to this worthy son of Bangladesh and of Asia. We convey our deepest condolences to his family, his beautiful country, Bangladesh, to Asia and to the entire United Nations family. May God receive his soul, and may he rest in peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, who will speak on behalf of the Asian States.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Asian Group, and on my own behalf, I would like to express our deepest sorrow and condolences to the family of Mr. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury, who died on 10 July 2001, and to the friendly Government and people of Bangladesh.

As the Assembly knows, Mr. Choudhury was an important General Assembly President. He devoted all his noble efforts to the service of the United Nations. The Asian Group feels very sad at the loss of such an outstanding person, one who had a great influence on the work of the Assembly's forty-first session.

As everyone knows, Mr. Choudhury played a great and distinguished role as Minister for Foreign Affairs of his country from 1985 to 1988. During that period, he played an important part in the enhancement and consolidation of peace and in negotiating many agreements and treaties that helped the Asian continent.

Finally, Mr. President, I would like, on behalf of the Asian Group, to thank you for your wisdom on this occasion to pay tribute to Mr. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury. May God bless his soul.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Bulgaria, His Excellency Mr. Stefan Tafrov, who will speak on behalf of the Eastern European States.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria): I take the floor on the occasion of a sad event that brought deep sorrow and grief to the people of Bangladesh two days ago — the passing of Mr. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury, Speaker of the Bangladesh National Parliament.

On 10 July, the heart of one of the prominent political figures and great leaders of Bangladesh stopped beating; his life-long commitment and personal contribution to the foreign policy of his country and to the work of the United Nations was internationally recognized and highly appreciated.

Recalling Mr. Humayun Choudhury's wide popularity among the people of his country, one might rightly say that he was a charismatic national leader with an outstanding personality. It is an undeniable fact that, thanks to Mr. Choudhury's personal efforts and proven diplomatic skills, Bangladesh achieved great

success in the development of cooperation with the Asian countries and with the international community as a whole. Mr. Choudhury's distinguished professional and personal qualifications were proved by his effective ruling of the work of the Bangladesh National Parliament. His wise leadership as President of the General Assembly at its forty-first session contributed to the successful accomplishment of the debates and the adoption and effective implementation of relevant General Assembly resolutions.

The bitter news about the passing of Mr. Choudhury echoes with the feeling of loss in the hearts of the Bangladesh people and leaders of the international community. On behalf of the Governments and the peoples of the Eastern European States, I have the honour to extend our most sincere condolences to the Mr. Choudhury's family and to the people of Bangladesh. May his soul rest in peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Grenada, His Excellency Mr. Lamuel Stanislaus, who will speak on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Stanislaus (Grenada): The Member States of the Latin America and Caribbean Group, for which I have the honour to speak, learned with surprise and sadness of the sudden, unexpected and untimely death of Mr. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury, Speaker of the Bangladesh National Parliament and a great former Minister for Foreign Affairs of his country, from 1985 to 1988.

Members of the Group would like, through the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, to convey to the Government and the people of that great country, and to the immediate family — his spouse, son and daughter — their deep and heartfelt sympathy.

Mr. Choudhury was one of the most experienced professional diplomats in the developing world, having served with distinction and competence in a series of diplomatic posts, both at home and abroad. He was a student, scholar, lawyer, politician, businessman, statesman, spouse and father par excellence.

On a personal note, I had the pleasure and satisfaction of knowing and benefiting from the wise, skilful, thoughtful and inclusive leadership of the deceased when he served with distinction as President of the forty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly. I was then a young diplomat in my mid-60s, a newcomer to the niceties of diplomacy and foreign affairs, inspired and motivated, however, by such a dynamic personality. President Choudhury was particularly concerned with safeguarding the rights and privileges of all Member States — large and small, rich and poor. Wherever humanly possible, he made it his business to preside, even when the smallest State was speaking, thereby demonstrating his great respect for the sovereign equality of States.

Amidst life, there is death. We do not know when, why, how or where this physical event will occur. Yet the suddenness of it, as in the case of one whom we knew and loved, leaves us in great shock and reminds us of our own mortality.

As we mourn his loss, we nevertheless celebrate a useful, constructive and productive life that was spent in the service of his great country and in the service of the international community.

Finally, in the words of a great psalmist, we reaffirm the following:

> "And when it is morning, take heed that thou mayest not live to see the evening. And when eventide is come, presume not to promise thyself another day. Be therefore in readiness stand and so order they life, that when death comes it will not find thee unprepared."

Requiescat in pace. May he rest in peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Finland, Her Excellency Ms. Anna-Maija Korpi, who will speak on behalf of the Western European and other States.

Ms. Korpi (Finland): It is with deep sorrow, as Chairperson of the Group of Western European and other States, that I express condolences on behalf of the members of the Group on the passing away of Mr. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury, Speaker of the Bangladesh National Parliament, former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh and former President of the General Assembly.

Our sympathy and condolences are offered to the Government and the people of Bangladesh and to Mr. Choudhury's family.

Humayun Rasheed Choudhury dedicated his long diplomatic and parliamentary career to his country, Bangladesh. Fifteen years have passed since he

presided over the General Assembly, 15 years during which he and his country have undergone a tremendous, deep transformation, becoming a country of great achievements. Bangladesh is a strong partner today. It has shown the courage and ability to work for peace and stability.

It is our duty to pay tribute to the statesman Humayun Rasheed Choudhury for the work he did for his country and the world community, especially the United Nations. Bangladesh has masterfully chaired the least developed countries group at the United Nations. It is at present a member of the Security Council. On this sad occasion of the passing of Mr. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury, his country, Bangladesh, should be gratified to know that its leaders — such as Humayun Rasheed Choudhury — have made the country known and held in high esteem by the world community.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, His Excellency Mr. James Cunningham, on behalf of the host country.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): On behalf of the United States delegation, as host country, I would like to extend my condolences to the Government, the delegation and the people of Bangladesh on the passing of Mr. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury. Mr. Choudhury was widely known as a consummate diplomat and public servant. He served with distinction as President of the General Assembly in 1986, showing great dedication to the ideals of this Organization. As a statesman, Foreign Minister and diplomat, Mr. Choudhury devoted considerable energy to realizing the national aspirations and goals of Bangladesh. This work culminated in his recent distinguished service as Speaker of his country's Parliament.

My country, especially, enjoyed the close friendship of Mr. Choudhury. He served ably as Ambassador to the United States in the early 1980s. Mr. Choudhury's wisdom, talent and grace will be missed in his own country, in America and on the world stage. Mr. Choudhury's countrymen and family have our greatest sympathies.

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, His Excellency Mr. Anwarul Karim Chowdhury.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): On behalf of the Government of Bangladesh, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to Member States of the United Nations for the condolences and sympathy they have extended at this special tribute of the General Assembly on the occasion of the sad demise of the honourable Speaker of the Bangladesh National Parliament and President of the forty-first session of the General Assembly, Mr. Humayun Rasheed Choudhury. We are very thankful to you, Mr. President, for the opportunity of holding this event and for your kind remarks on this occasion.

On behalf of my Government, I would like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette for her very moving message on behalf of the Secretary-General and the Secretariat. We are truly touched by the kind and gracious remarks delivered by the Chairmen of the five regional groups of the United Nations — the representatives of Rwanda, Qatar, Bulgaria, Grenada and Finland — and by the representative of the host country, the United States.

This morning's tribute has indeed been a genuine recognition of the lifelong achievements and endeavours of the late Ambassador Choudhury, who was a key figure in the arena of diplomacy and politics, both nationally and internationally.

Once again, on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh and on my own behalf, I am grateful for the kind gesture that has been made by one and all as a mark of respect for the eventful life of the late Mr. Choudhury. I will have the honour of transmitting the sentiments expressed here at this plenary meeting to the Government of Bangladesh and to the members of his very bereaved family.

Agenda item 122 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Letter dated 11 July 2001 from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly (A/55/1015)

The President: I would now like to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/55/1015. It contains a letter from the Secretary-General addressed to me, in which he informs the Assembly that 16 Member States are in arrears in the

payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I would like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years."

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in document A/55/1015?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 10 (*continued*)

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

Report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict (A/55/985 and Corr.1)

The President: As I stressed in my letter of 18 June 2001 addressed to all Member States and observers, this is a very important report that needs to be considered by the General Assembly. Therefore, I scheduled this plenary debate for this early date, although I am aware of the very tight schedule of Member States.

Given the limited time we have now, I also proposed in my letter that after this debate a short procedural resolution be adopted whereby the report of the Secretary-General would be forwarded to all relevant organs within the United Nations system and other actors addressed in the report for their consideration and review, further recommendations and action. These organs could be invited to report to the General Assembly during its fifty-sixth session. At that session the Assembly could consider the report and all recommendations in a comprehensive manner and also discuss the recommendations addressed to the Assembly. My Office is preparing a draft resolution to this effect, and it will be circulated to Member States for their consideration in due course.

I now give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General to present the report of the Secretary-General.

The Deputy Secretary-General: Recent debates in this Assembly — most notably during the Millennium Summit last September — have shown wide agreement on the need to make conflict prevention a central pillar of our collective security system in the twenty-first century. Indeed, there is a broad consensus that the most promising approach to preventing armed conflict is to develop long-term and integrated strategies, combining a wide range of measures aimed at eradicating or reducing the underlying causes of conflict. In the Millennium Declaration, world leaders pledged to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations in this field.

The United Nations system already contributes significantly to the prevention of armed conflict. Yet if the report that I have the pleasure to present to the Assembly today has one message, it is that we must intensify those efforts.

The costs of not preventing violence are enormous. They are counted not only in damage inflicted, but also in opportunities lost.

The international community spent about $200 billion on the seven major interventions of the 1990s, in Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, the Persian Gulf, Cambodia and El Salvador. And such calculations do not, of course, reflect the human costs of war and their repercussions for families, communities, local and national institutions and economies and neighbouring countries.

Drawing on the lessons we have learned, the Secretary-General suggests that the following 10 principles should guide our future approach to conflict prevention: First, conflict prevention is one of the primary obligations of Member States set forth in the Charter, and our efforts in conflict prevention must be in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter.

Second, conflict prevention must begin with national Governments and local actors. The United Nations and the international community should support their efforts and assist them in building national capacities.

Third, the most useful instruments of prevention are those described in Chapter VI of the Charter, which deals with the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Measures under Chapter VII are normally taken only after a conflict has broken out, although they may still have a preventive effect by deterring other potential conflicts. There may also be cases where certain measures under Chapter VII, such as economic sanctions, can be used preventively.

Fourth, to be most effective, preventive action should be initiated as early as possible.

Fifth, the primary focus of prevention should be the multidimensional root causes of conflict. The proximate cause of conflict may be an outbreak of public disorder or a protest over a particular incident, but the root causes are more likely to be found in socio-economic inequities, systematic ethnic discrimination, denial of human rights, disputes over political participation, or long-standing grievances over the allocation of land, water and other resources.

Sixth, an effective preventive strategy requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses both short-term and long-term political, developmental, humanitarian and human rights programmes.

Seventh, conflict prevention and sustainable development reinforce each other. An investment in prevention should be seen as a simultaneous investment in sustainable development, since it is obvious that the latter is more likely to happen in a peaceful environment.

Eighth, United Nations development programmes and activities can also be viewed from a conflict prevention perspective. This, in turn, requires greater coherence and coordination in the United Nations system.

Ninth, the United Nations is not the only actor in prevention, and may not always be the actor best suited to take the lead. Member States, international and regional organizations, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and other civil society actors also have very important roles to play.

Finally, tenth, effective preventive action by the United Nations requires sustained political will on the part of Member States. That includes first and foremost a readiness to provide the United Nations with the political support and resources necessary for undertaking effective preventive action and for developing its institutional capacity in this field.

Let me turn now to what the Assembly, based on those principles, can do to enhance its role in conflict prevention. The report recommends a wide range of actions, including: considering a more active use of the Assembly's powers, in accordance with Articles 10, 11 and 14 of the Charter; and contributing to the establishment of prevention practices at the local, national, regional and global levels — and the Assembly has already created norms that have a bearing on the prevention of conflicts, for example resolution 43/51, which contains an annex entitled "Declaration on the Prevention and Removal of Disputes and Situations Which May Threaten International Peace and Security and the Role of the United Nations in this Field".

Another such action is promoting a culture of prevention. A number of items on the Assembly's agenda, such as development, disarmament, human rights, humanitarian assistance, democratization, environmental degradation, terrorism and AIDS, have a conflict prevention dimension.

Next is enhancing the Assembly's interaction with the Security Council, particularly in developing long-term conflict prevention and peace-building strategies. General Assembly members should have an opportunity to express their views on conflict prevention more often in the Council.

The Secretary-General also urges the Assembly to consider authorizing him, as well as other United Nations organs, to take advantage of the advisory competence of the International Court of Justice. Needless to say, Member States themselves are urged to resort to the Court earlier and more often to settle their disputes, to accept the general jurisdiction of the Court and, when adopting multilateral treaties under United Nations auspices, to adopt clauses providing for disputes to be referred to the Court.

The report contains further recommendations regarding the role of other principal United Nations organs, which I encourage members to study carefully if they have not already done so. For example, the Secretary-General recommends that a future high-level segment of the annual session of the Economic and Social Council should address the root causes of conflict and the role of development in promoting long-term conflict prevention.

Because of their proximity and their greater grasp of the historical background of a conflict, regional

organizations too can contribute significantly to conflict prevention. The Secretary-General calls on Member States to support the follow-up processes launched by the last two high-level meetings between the United Nations and regional organizations, which dealt with conflict prevention and peace-building respectively.

He urges non-governmental organizations with an interest in conflict prevention to organize an international conference of local, national and international non-governmental organizations on their role in conflict prevention and on future interaction with the United Nations in that field. And he encourages the business community to adopt socially responsible practices that foster a climate of peace in conflict-prone societies, help prevent and mitigate crisis situations, and contribute to reconstruction and reconciliation.

The United Nations system has made a promising start in engendering a culture of prevention in its day-to-day activities. Yet an adequate capacity for conflict prevention is still lacking. That capacity should be strengthened in the Secretariat and in other relevant parts of the United Nations system. There is also a need for United Nations conflict prevention activities to be placed on a more stable and predictable financial basis.

Effective conflict prevention clearly requires action that goes beyond what is recommended in the report, and indeed beyond any institutional mechanism. The international community has a moral responsibility to ensure that vulnerable people are protected. We must prevent genocide like that perpetrated in Rwanda from ever happening again.

Why is effective conflict prevention still so seldom practised? And why do we so often fail when there is a clear potential for a preventive strategy to succeed? Past experience offers two main answers. First, if the Government concerned refuses to admit that it has a problem which could lead to violent conflict and rejects offers of assistance, there often is very little that outside actors, including the United Nations, can do. Secondly, the international community all too often lacks the political will to take effective action in time.

But such attitudes are not the only obstacle. No less significant are the ways in which Member States define their national interest in any given crisis. A new, more broadly defined, more widely conceived definition of national interest in the new century would induce States to find far greater unity in the pursuit of the fundamental goals of the Charter, including conflict prevention. As the Secretary-General has stressed,

> "in ... a growing number of challenges facing humanity, the collective interest *is* the national interest". (*A/55/985, para. 164*)

Preventive strategies are not easy to implement. The costs of prevention have to be paid in the present, while its benefits lie in the future. In addition, the benefits are often not tangible: when prevention succeeds, little happens that is visible. Yet the report clearly demonstrates that conflict prevention is the most desirable and cost-effective approach to promoting the peaceful and just international order envisaged in the Charter.

Governments provide the best protection for their citizens against unwelcome outside interference when they peacefully resolve a situation that might deteriorate into a violent conflict, and call for preventive assistance as soon as it is needed. Used in this way, international preventive action can significantly strengthen the capacity of Member States to preserve and exercise their national sovereignty.

The time has come to translate the rhetoric of conflict prevention into concrete action. Moving from a culture of reaction to one of effective prevention will require sustained political will and a long-term commitment of resources, not least in the field of economic and social development. Indeed, development assistance plays an important role in reducing poverty and inequalities, and in enhancing justice, governance, human rights and security. Thus, it is a powerful preventive tool. It is therefore essential to increase the flow of official development assistance, which, as a percentage of gross national product, dropped last year to the lowest level ever.

It is my hope, and the Secretary-General's hope, that the United Nations system and Member States will be able to work together towards the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report.

The President: I should like to inform members that in a letter dated 10 July 2001, addressed to me, the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations, in her capacity as Chairperson of the Group of Western European and other States for the

month of July, requests that the General Assembly hear a statement by the observer of Switzerland in the debate on the report of the Secretary-General on prevention of armed conflict. Taking into account the importance attached to the issue under discussion, it is proposed that the General Assembly should take a decision on that request.

May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear the observer of Switzerland in the debate on the report of the Secretary-General?

It was so decided.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): As a focus of its foreign policy and diplomatic efforts, Bangladesh has been stressing that conflict prevention is a political, humanitarian, economic and moral imperative. We therefore consider it a special occasion that the General Assembly of the United Nations, for the first time, is taking up prevention of armed conflict as a specific subject matter. We were actively involved in the deliberations when the General Assembly addressed the matter in the past within the broader context of the Agenda for Peace and its supplement. Bangladesh took the initiative in promoting a preventive culture. We focused on long-term measures that contribute to building the foundations of durable peace. Our efforts led to the adoption by the General Assembly at its fifty-third session of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. This timeless document is contained in resolution 53/243.

The Security Council, for its part, has been addressing this issue and held open debates in November 1999 and July 2000. It transpired from the debates at the Council, where a large number of the United Nations membership took part, that conflict prevention required a comprehensive, system-wide approach. It became increasingly clear that prevention required the active involvement of all actors: Member States, regional organizations, the United Nations, its funds and programmes, the Bretton Woods institutions, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society in general.

The Security Council, hence, asked for a report by the Secretary-General to be submitted also to the General Assembly. As introduced by Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette, this seminal report contains recommendations for a comprehensive approach to the prevention of armed conflict involving system-wide action. These recommendations have been submitted after extensive consultations within the United Nations system. It is up to us now to act on them.

As the Secretary-General mentions, the 1997 Carnegie Commission report came up with revealing figures. The international community spent $200 billion on the seven major wars of the 1990s. Preventive action, the report indicates, could have saved $130 billion. In the case of Rwanda, a reinforced United Nations mission capable of preventing the genocide would have cost $500 million. Instead, the international community ultimately spent $4.5 billion in assistance to Rwanda following the genocide.

The human cost of war is incalculable. I ask the Assembly to think of the genocide in Rwanda, the massacre in Srebrenica and the mass killings committed in Kosovo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Angola and elsewhere in the world. Think of the individual fellow human beings — men, women and children — whom we failed to save from the ravages of war, death, suffering and humiliation. The legacies of war are long borne by nations. For these nations, the present is in ruins; but the future is also rendered bleak by armed conflicts, not to speak of the collapsed States. We have a Charter commitment, a moral obligation to save people from the devastations of war.

The Security Council, on receipt of the report from the Secretary-General, held a day-long debate on 21 June, 2001 with the participation of the broader membership of the United Nations. The open debate held under the Bangladesh presidency focused on the recommendations relating to the role of the Security Council and received a positive response from the participants. Earlier this week, Bangladesh initiated consideration by the Security Council of action on the recommendation within its competence through a draft resolution.

We appreciate that the Secretary-General was engaged in an extensive consultative process involving all major actors in articulating his recommendations in the report. Bangladesh supports almost all of them. On this occasion, let me address a few core issues.

First, the role of the Security Council: its primary responsibility is to maintain international peace and security, in other words, the prevention of conflicts, peacekeeping or peace enforcement. Preventive action includes peacekeeping and peace-building. It can work

when the Security Council is able to play its role effectively, objectively and without constraints.

The Security Council should be able to take decisions on the basis of what a given situation demands, on the basis of the merit of the case, and not on the basis of what some members of the Council are willing to support. I need not go into details. The Carlsson report on genocide in Rwanda and the Secretary-General's report on the Srebrenica massacre have been revealing. We should benefit from the lessons learned from these debacles. I would draw attention to the need for follow-up to such reports. An imperative for the international community is to bring necessary sustained support to post-conflict peace-building so that tragedies that it failed to prevent do not occur again.

Secondly, with respect to political will, the Secretary-General has on various occasions expressed regret concerning the lack of critical political will. The euphemism stands for the absence of willingness to join others in concerted action, as well as a lack of willingness on the part of Member States, particularly those in a position to do so, to provide necessary men and money. Unless we are able to break these shackles, conflict prevention will remain elusive in the real sense.

Thirdly, as to the relation between conflict prevention and sustainable development, we see the two as complementary and mutually reinforcing. The measures recommended for structural prevention seek to address the root causes of conflict. They are very much those on the economic and social agenda of the United Nations. We fully agree with the recommendation that preventive strategies be integrated into the socio-economic development programme, where necessary.

Fourthly, concerning investment in prevention, the greatest difficulty in getting resources for preventive action is that its costs have to be borne now, while its results lie in the future. Investment in conflict prevention should be seen as our premium for a secure future, a future insured against the costs of war — financial, human and material — a future assured of shared security instead of a shared burden. This is the main message of the Secretary-General in his report.

Fifthly, we must move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. The conflicts that arose across four continents in the 1990s were certainly not simply a post-cold-war phenomenon. They also resulted from our mistaken approach to peace and security. For too long and on too many occasions, we waited to react instead of acting to prevent.

The General Assembly needs to respond to the report of the Secretary-General by supporting his recommendations and by providing guidance for their implementation. Bangladesh would set the following priorities.

First, as to addressing the root causes of conflicts, the Secretary-General's April 1998 report on the causes of conflict in Africa should provide the basis for action. Secondly, there must be full and effective implementation of the plans and programmes of action coming out of the major United Nations conferences of the 1990s. A great deal of the objectives of conflict prevention will be achieved if we can make substantive progress there. Thirdly, we must provide the Organization with the human and financial resources necessary to properly carry out its responsibilities and missions. Additional resources are certainly necessary, but we also believe that better management of resources will strengthen arguments in favour of increased support. Fourthly, the least developed countries are among the most vulnerable. Many of the least developed countries are affected by armed conflicts. In this context, the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries should receive the special attention of the international community. Fifthly, this week we have been deliberating on the threats of small arms and light weapons. Member States must act seriously to curb the arms bazaar and destroy the arsenals. We look forward to the adoption of an effective programme of action now being negotiated.

Long-term conflict prevention objectives can be reinforced by effective implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. In this context, the Secretary-General makes a specific recommendation in his report. He recalls that the Assembly, in its resolution 53/243,

> "called on Member States, civil society and the whole United Nations system to promote activities related to conflict prevention". (*55/985, para. 29*)

We would underscore strongly the need for creative implementation of this recommendation at the national, regional and global levels. Every war and

every conflict challenges the foundation of the United Nations. Armed conflicts must be prevented, given the magnitude of death, destruction and suffering and the physical and moral burden placed by them on the international community. The responsibility has to be assumed by all. The Secretary-General has recommended some useful measures in that direction. Let us respond positively.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation would like to thank you, Sir, for convening this debate to discuss the prevention of conflicts, which lies at the very heart of the General Assembly's competence under Articles 10, 11 and 14 of the United Nations Charter. We should also like to voice our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his detailed report on conflict prevention, the topic of this meeting, and to welcome last month's initiative of the Security Council to convene a special meeting to debate this issue. We expect that similar debates will be held in the specialized agencies and organs of the United Nations in order to establish a clear strategy and vision that would guide the General Assembly on the path to conflict prevention.

My delegation has considered in depth the Secretary-General's report in document A/55/985 and the recommendations contained therein. We take this opportunity to comment on the report and we hope that our contribution will enrich our debate. We cannot address every recommendation and will therefore focus on a select few.

At the outset, our delegation believes that there is a close link between the Secretary-General's reports on the prevention of conflicts and on the causes of conflict in Africa. The latter report characterized in detail the causes of conflict in Africa as being rooted in the colonial period and in socio-economic and external factors. My delegation also believes that addressing the root causes of these conflicts is essential to preventing their recurrence, given the different and specific natures of such conflicts from one region to another.

In its preventive action, the United Nations is called upon strictly to apply the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, in particular those relating to political independence, sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, territorial integrity and the peaceful settlement of disputes, as provided for in Chapter VI of the Charter, in accordance with the principles of justice and international law.

In this context, we are pleased that the Secretary-General has clearly stressed the importance of this principle by stating that the efforts of the United Nations in conflict prevention should be in keeping with the purposes and principles of the Charter. Secondly, we support the Secretary-General's efforts to ensure that the United Nations moves from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. We believe that such a preventive approach would make it possible for the international community to save lives and preserve material resources that could be invested in conflict prevention. We agree with him that the main responsibility in conflict prevention lies with the national Governments and that the main role of the United Nations and the international community is to support national efforts as an investment in sustainable development.

Thirdly, we support the Secretary-General's first recommendation, that the authority of the General Assembly should be strengthened by establishing long-term conflict prevention strategies in the framework of an open-ended working group that will work to develop the necessary strategies on the basis of General Assembly resolutions on conflict prevention. We also support recommendation 4, on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the field of conflict prevention. This recommendation is closely linked to the need to deal with the root causes of conflict, given the role of the Economic and Social Council in the areas of development and the eradication of poverty. This also applies to recommendation 5, on the International Court of Justice.

Fourthly, we welcome and support the strengthening of the role of the Secretary-General — his well-known role in conflict prevention under the Charter and his concern to cooperate with Member States to that end. With regard to the informal network that the Secretary-General would like to create by bringing together eminent persons with a view to preventing conflicts, we believe that it should be based on transparent criteria, including consultations with Member States.

Fifthly, with regard to recommendation 14, on transparency in disarmament, we agree with the Secretary-General about the dangers of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and we

await with impatience the successful outcome of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We had hoped, however, that the report would also deal with the dangers of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, the most dangerous weapons of all.

Sixthly, with regard to recommendation 16, on activities in the area of human rights, we are convinced that human rights constitute a solid basis for conflict prevention. At the same time, however, we would like to issue a warning that analysis and information from human rights bodies and mechanisms in the area of conflict prevention should be used carefully, because as long as that machinery deals with human rights on a selective basis and for political reasons, with some countries being targeted and others not, and as long as eyes are closed and there is silence on the subject of human rights violations in many countries — and until such a time as transparency and objectivity prevail in the treatment of human rights issues in all countries without exception — this recommendation will not serve the primary and noble objective that prompted the Secretary-General to include it in his report. On the contrary, it would make it possible for the selective approach to continue and to be adopted by the human rights machinery within the United Nations system.

We understand and fully support Article 71 of the Charter, on the contribution that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can make to achieving United Nations objectives, first and foremost in conflict prevention. Some NGOs have been successful in this field, as the Secretary-General has indicated in paragraph 143 of his report. Unfortunately, in recent years we have noted the appearance of NGOs that are working to inflame conflict instead of trying to put an end to bloodshed. In the Sudan, for example, we have seen NGOs working to directly support rebel movements by providing them with weapons, ammunition and logistical military capacity for their activities. This has taken place recently in the western Bahr el-Ghazal region of southern Sudan. Such activities create extremely dangerous situations, as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has confirmed. Unfortunately, such NGOs collect contributions in Western countries under the pretext of providing help and humanitarian assistance to the African people involved in the conflict.

Consequently, with regard to the implementation of this recommendation, if the NGO conference is convened, we will call for particular attention to be paid to the participation of responsible NGOs whose history and activities show that they have made a positive contribution in the field of conflict prevention, in cooperation with and with the complete participation of the Governments concerned.

In paragraph 110 of the report, the Secretary-General refers to the role of humanitarian agencies in the area of the so-called consolidated appeals with regard to zones and regions, which, for humanitarian reasons, are outside conflict areas so as to allow humanitarian assistance to reach vulnerable groups. I would like to say that the Government of the Sudan has extended full cooperation to the United Nations in the attainment of this humanitarian objective, especially to Operation Lifeline. The Government of the Sudan has always stated its desire for a general ceasefire so as to facilitate the inflow of humanitarian assistance to the affected population in order to create a climate of confidence to make it possible to strengthen peace efforts. But the rebel movement has repeatedly refused. The most recent aggression carried out by the rebel movement last month in the western part of Bahr el-Ghazal created a humanitarian crisis that caused thousands of people to leave their homes as they were getting ready for the harvest in the area described in the information bulletin of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs as the breadbasket for the people of the region. We call upon the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on humanitarian affairs to respond positively to the request of developing countries to provide periodic information reports on humanitarian activities in all countries, thereby making such activities more transparent and strengthening confidence, the impartiality and integrity of the humanitarian activities carried out by this Organization in countries affected by armed conflict.

We attach great importance to recommendation 20 of the report of the Secretary-General, which gives the Emergency Relief Coordinator and United Nations agencies mandates that we believe are not based on the Charter of the United Nations or on resolutions of the General Assembly or the Security Council. There is a danger of deviation when it comes to this recommendation, consistent with the fact that certain United Nations humanitarian agencies have agreements with NGOs that are known for their hostility to certain Governments affected by the conflict.

Some of those non-governmental organizations have sided with the rebel movement by providing them with military support, which is in flagrant contradiction to their humanitarian objectives. I would even say that these NGOs are a third party in such conflicts, fuelling and perpetuating them.

As regards the recommendation proposing that the Security Council call on the Emergency Relief Coordinator to submit a report, on a periodic basis, to the members of the Council, we feel that this could marginalize the central role of the General Assembly, as defined in the Charter of the United Nations. I might add that this move is on the whole not safe from politically motivated selectivity, as recent experience has shown.

As regards food security and emergency food aid, as referred to in paragraph 113 of the report, certain African countries, including the Sudan, are convinced that the United Nations, especially those agencies responsible for managing humanitarian assistance in southern Sudan, know that responsibility for the situation there is that of the rebel movement. This is something that the entire world can see on its television screens.

Suffice it to mention in this context that many non-governmental organizations known for their responsible and impartial work have refused to bend to the pressures of the rebel movement to distribute assistance, so as not to see it fall into the hands of rebel fighters. Perhaps the main difference between the Government and the rebel movements in this area is that the rebel movements know that they have no legal responsibilities, which makes it possible for them to continue to appropriate the assistance provided and to use it to help their forces, to the detriment of innocent citizens affected by the conflict.

In conclusion, let me again say that I am very satisfied at the fact that this meeting will strengthen the principal role of the General Assembly as an international forum that is unique by virtue of the fact that it has worldwide representation. We hope that this leading role will be maintained in establishing guidelines for other agencies to develop the necessary strategies for conflict prevention.

Mr. de Ruyt (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the member of the European Economic Area — Iceland — associate themselves with this statement.

I should like to begin by thanking the Deputy Secretary-General, Mrs. Fréchette, for her introduction of the Secretary-General's important report on the prevention of armed conflict. The European Union welcomes the holding of this debate and the opportunity it provides to all Member States to speak in broad lines to the questions raised in the report.

First of all, I should like to affirm the European Union's support for the general approach that has been proposed. Today's debate is only the beginning. We hope that following the discussions to be held in the various organs of the United Nations system and in other forums, the General Assembly will have the possibility of examining in its entirety the report and the recommendations it contains, thereby ensuring that consistency in the examination of this question.

All of us are profoundly concerned by the violent conflicts that continue to prevail throughout the world, and which are particularly worrisome in developing countries. The main consequences of these conflict are great suffering on the part of the population. They also have devastating effects on economic and social structures and on the environment in those countries.

Particular efforts should therefore be made in the area of conflict prevention. The cost of those efforts, in both human and financial terms, will be much less than that of managing or resolving such conflicts.

In this context, we would like to reiterate the commitments undertaken in the Millennium Declaration, which recognized the need to promote a culture of prevention. For the European Union, conflict prevention is part and parcel of a comprehensive, long-term approach whose objective is to resolve conflicts, strengthen peace and prevent new outbreaks.

We are in full agreement with the Secretary-General when he states that the primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with national Governments and other local actors. We believe that viable solutions to potential conflicts can be found only through greater involvement of the Governments themselves. On this point, the European Union would like to stress the important complementary role that can be played by

civil society. This is due in part to the fact that civil society organizations are often present in the field, precisely where State structures are non-existent, and are in a good position to identify the root causes of conflicts at the earliest opportunity.

The international community must contribute to the development of local and regional capacities when it comes to conflict prevention, as the Secretary-General's report stresses. By way of example, the European Union is already cooperating with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and African subregional organizations.

The European Union agrees with the Secretary-General as to the close link that exists between conflict prevention and sustainable development and the struggle against poverty. Development efforts are to no avail in conflict situations. Underdevelopment and poverty are among the factors underlying the outbreak of conflicts.

The Secretary-General rightly stresses the need to attack the root causes of conflicts. We believe that the international community should define an integrated, long-term approach to the question of sustainable development. An integrated approach must include the following aspects: sustainable economic development; democratization; respect for human rights, the rule of law and the principles of good governance; the fight against drugs and international crime; and support for progress in world health.

We congratulate the funds and programmes — in particular the United Nations Development Programme — for their supplementary efforts towards good governance and respect for the rule of law. The international financial institutions should similarly be made aware of this fact.

The promotion and protection of human rights and the examination of all violations of human rights must be an integral part of strategies to prevent armed conflict. This includes the full enjoyment by women of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We share the view of the Secretary-General that the role of women in prevention efforts must be encouraged. It is also necessary to incorporate an analysis of gender-specific problems in early-warning activities.

The European Union attaches particular importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of children. As the Secretary-General rightly stresses, without hope for the future, young people can easily fall prey to those who are recruiting fighters. All strategies of conflict prevention must take into account the trauma caused by acts of violence of which children are either victims or witnesses.

At this very moment, the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms is taking place in the General Assembly Hall, and the European Union wishes to take this opportunity to stress the importance it gives to this issue in the context of conflict prevention.

We should mobilize the entire United Nations system. When it comes to the principal organs of the United Nations, we believe that increased cooperation between the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council is needed. We have already had the chance to address the role of the Security Council as concerns conflict prevention. I would like to add here that we endorse the recommendation that allows the General Assembly to exercise fully its responsibilities in the area of conflict prevention. The same applies to the Economic and Social Council, particularly when it is considering the causes of conflict that fall within its core mandate.

The Secretary-General has so far played an important role in conflict prevention. The European Union believes that this role must be strengthened. The Secretary-General should make full use of the prerogatives given him directly by the United Nations Charter and of his moral authority. The Union also recognizes the importance of the role of the Department of Political Affairs as coordinator of the efforts in conflict prevention.

In the international community, the European Union intends to contribute actively to efforts made in the area of conflict prevention. In the framework of its security and defence policy, the Union attaches great importance to improving the effectiveness and consistency of its external action in the area of conflict prevention. The objective is to improve the preventive capacities of the entire international community. A programme of action was adopted to that end at the recent European Summit at Goteborg, which marked the end of Sweden's Presidency. The European Union is convinced that all conflict prevention action must be carried out with the fullest respect for the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. The Union is seeking to develop enhanced cooperation with all

international and regional organizations, as well as with the representatives of civil society, in areas including advanced warning, analysis, action and evaluation. Among the concrete proposals envisaged with the United Nations are the intensification of exchanges of information, practical cooperation and joint training programmes for personnel both at Headquarters and in the field.

As to the financial area, the European Union and its member States, which are major contributors of official development assistance, will continue to honour their commitments. The Union is ready to discuss with the Secretary-General the financial implications of his report. The Secretary-General can count on the active support and cooperation of the European Union in the area of conflict prevention. We are ready to extend to him the assistance he desires in the preparation of a road map for the implementation of concrete recommendations.

We hope that important results will be achieved so that resolute progress can be made towards the objective of a world saved from the scourge of war.

Mr. Aboulgheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I would like to express our appreciation for your having convened this debate on conflict prevention. The importance of the debate is growing in the minds of many actors throughout the international community. The priority of the issues covered here has also been growing over the last decade. We wish to thank the Secretary-General for his major report on this issue.

The Egyptian delegation has a number of observations on the Secretary-General's report. I would like to set forth the following brief comments. First, we find that the basic premise of the report, as mentioned in paragraph 6, limits the prevention of armed conflicts to those occurring within States. While we understand that armed conflict may occur within States, we do not agree to limiting the concept of prevention to intra-State conflict, given that continuing, potentially explosive regional and international situations require major efforts to prevent them from erupting into global armed conflicts.

Second, my delegation has considered a number of relevant issues before the Security Council involving its work. We now deem it most important to affirm that the General Assembly, as the Secretary-General himself has mentioned, must assume its own role, major responsibilities and competencies in the prevention of armed conflict. In this regard, we support the first recommendation embodied in the report and invite the Member States to consider the ways and means for the General Assembly to play an active role, through the establishment of an open-ended working group to examine the Secretary-General's report.

Third, the Egyptian delegation is of the view that all proposals embodied in the report on activating the role of the major bodies of the United Nations in the realm of conflict prevention require setting aside additional financial resources. It is unacceptable to propose that the United Nations and its specialized agencies undertake a global approach to problems between societies or international problems and to promote the concept of prevention without making available the financial resources necessary for such a major transformation. As the Secretary-General is proposing that financing be carried out on a regular and orderly basis, a zero-growth budget cannot provide the financial resources required for action aimed at prevention without adversely affecting resources allocated for development, which is unacceptable.

Fourth, with regard to resources, the report sets forth the role that development plays in helping to prevent conflict. However, development cannot and must not have conflict prevention as its sole objective. It is, rather, a commitment on the part of donor countries to come to the aid of developing countries and to spur forward their development process based on priorities that the latter set. It is regrettable that such assistance, even in this context, thus far has neither reached the level hoped for nor is on a par with commitments earlier entered into. We are afraid that adding the goal of conflict prevention to the overriding goal of achieving development marks a major reversal for developing countries now receiving development assistance, particularly those not currently threatened by conflict. We also do not agree with paragraph 101, which asserts that any policy or programme aimed at development must be viewed from the perspective of conflict prevention.

Fifth, in the paragraphs on disarmament we have not found one single mention of weapons that threaten international peace and security, apart from small arms and light weapons. We fully understand that this kind of weaponry does indeed threaten the security of societies, particularly in the context of civil war and of intra-State conflicts that pit the citizens of a State

against one another. However, the report should not have ignored the importance that a growing number of States attach to nuclear disarmament and to ridding the world of weapons of mass destruction that jeopardize the very existence of entire societies. We invite the Secretary-General to close this gap as soon as possible.

Sixth, there is no doubt that conflict prevention efforts can and must take into consideration a great number of human rights, and not be confined to civil and political rights. They must consider on an equal footing economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development. Egypt is convinced that the programmes of technical cooperation that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has undertaken together with various Governments are having a major impact on increasing awareness of human rights and the rule of law. These rights have a positive effect on disseminating the concept of a culture of peace, understanding and conciliation.

We acknowledge the importance of the efforts of the Security Council and the General Assembly to prevent armed conflict and their reliance on information and analyses published by human rights organizations and other mechanisms. We believe that in turn these organizations and mechanisms should be neutral and balanced and not be politicized. We also stress that these human rights bodies must investigate and confirm the credibility of the sources, especially non-governmental sources, on which they rely, inasmuch as these bodies base their analytical opinions and objective conclusions on such sources.

Seventh, the Egyptian delegation understands the particular importance attached to involving civil society in the work of the Organization. We note recommendation 28, in which the Secretary-General exhorts Member States to support his Global Compact initiative. However, we are not completely satisfied with the inclusion in paragraph 149 of the idea that this initiative would build upon what businesses can do to enhance human security. As far as we are concerned, the concept of human security is an open-ended, loose concept that has yet to be defined. We therefore look forward to seeing this concept and this initiative further developed and explored from all perspectives within a governmental framework, in implementation of General Assembly resolution 55/215.

Before concluding I would like to stress that in paragraph 77 of the Secretary-General's report there is a most unfortunate error. The occupied Palestinian territories are referred to as "the Occupied Territories". I had already drawn attention to this issue when I addressed the Security Council on 21 June. Alas, while a correction to the Secretary-General's report was issued, we feel that what we find in this paragraph reflects an effort on the part of certain groups within the Secretariat to circumvent that correction. I consider this a very serious issue with political repercussions. The position of these groups within the Secretariat must not be allowed to prevail. Moreover, I hope that a correction of that paragraph will indeed be immediately published.

I will bring up this issue when the Arab Group meets today. The Group will send a message on this issue to the Secretary-General.

These are our initial remarks on the report of the Secretary-General. The Egyptian delegation thanks you, Mr. President, once again for having organized this debate. We hope that it will be possible to continue this debate, consultations among delegations, so that we can arrive at a generally acceptable plan of action that enables us to pay due attention to the issue of the prevention of armed conflict.

The President: For the information of the representative of Egypt and of everyone else, document A/55/985/Corr.1 includes a correction to paragraph 77.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): I would like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her introduction of this important report. On the sixth anniversary of Srebrenica, it is right that we pause for a moment to reflect on the important mission of the United Nations and the need for continued and improved efforts to preserve peace and avoid conflict. I thank the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and the Secretariat generally for their collective efforts to help all of us move the United Nations and the international community from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention.

The report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict is thought-provoking and provides us, and indeed the entire international system, with useful background and many recommendations to consider. My authorities will give them the careful review they deserve.

Leadership and political will are the two most important tools for effective conflict prevention. A

nation, an institution, a non-governmental organization or an individual can rise to the challenge of prevention. In his report the Secretary-General stressed that the primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with national Governments, with civil society playing an important role. This is easier said than done, as history amply demonstrates, but the main role of the United Nations and the international community must be to support national conflict prevention efforts and to assist in building national capacity in this field.

Since a tremendous amount of United Nations resources is dedicated to addressing armed conflicts that have already erupted, the pertinent question we need to ask is how the United Nations, the Security Council, the General Assembly and the other United Nations bodies can work more effectively and realistically together. In addressing that question we need also to be aware that the United Nations system itself cannot succeed without the support of nations and of non-governmental actors as well.

The Secretary-General's report is very useful in clarifying how the various parts of the United Nations system can improve cooperation and coordination. We fully agree that the Secretary-General, the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice and various United Nations agencies, funds and programmes all have important contributions to make. The United Nations system needs to break down barriers of communication that inhibit United Nations bodies and institutions from achieving better coordination.

I want especially to applaud the Secretary-General's commitment to enhancing his own role in preventing conflicts through four significant initiatives. He proposes to authorize more fact-finding and confidence-building missions to volatile regions; to build relationships between the United Nations and regional partners; to seek the help of a panel of eminent persons for conflict prevention; and to improve the capacity within the Secretariat in support of conflict prevention. All of those initiatives have our strong support.

The General Assembly has invited the Secretary-General to strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat for the collection of information and analysis, and to set up an early warning system. Given the tremendously important role of the Secretary-General in preventive diplomacy, that is a useful initiative. The Secretary-General should have easy access to information from across the Secretariat and from United Nations country teams in the field, so that he may pursue conflict prevention more effectively and efficiently. To aid him in that effort, there should be an office within the Secretariat that brings together and analyses the many diverse channels of information now flowing to separate United Nations offices. I commend the Secretary-General, the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations for their ongoing work in refining that concept.

We also applaud the Secretary-General's recognition of the important role that must be played by civil society and the private sector in conflict prevention. In volatile areas of potential conflict, the activities of international non-governmental organizations, both in relief efforts and in efforts aimed at creating and strengthening social, political and economic institutions, are indispensable. And, if it is so — and I think it is — that economic progress and development are fundamental to conflict prevention, we simply cannot expect to succeed without the involvement of the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

The General Assembly, like the Security Council and other constituent parts of the United Nations system, will need time to evaluate this thoughtful report, and time to fully digest the details and the recommendations. It is an excellent basis for going ahead. Our hope is that we will be able to use it to devise better means to prevent conflicts and to build on the progress we are already making. If we succeed, we will need fewer interventions, peacekeeping missions and massive humanitarian relief efforts in the future. And that, I hope, is the goal of all of us.

Mr. Manalo (Philippines): At the outset, I wish to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her presentation this morning of the report of the Secretary-General (A/55/985).

Today, the General Assembly is discussing the specific issue of conflict prevention for the first time. It is an issue that has been kept more or less backstage in the international peace and security arena. We therefore thank the Secretary-General for his timely report on the prevention of armed conflict, which he describes as consisting of both operational and structural measures.

We share his view that the primary responsibility for preventing armed conflict rests with national Governments, but that in certain situations the active participation or assistance of the United Nations or of the international community, regional actors and non-governmental organizations may be necessary.

A coherent and coordinated approach within the United Nations system to the prevention of armed conflict is important. In that regard, we agree with the recommendations and observations of the Secretary-General on the appropriate contributions that the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General and the International Court of Justice can make.

That will in turn necessitate greater interaction between the General Assembly and the Security Council, and among the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. The General Assembly, in our view, should therefore heed the Secretary-General's call that it consider "more active use of its powers", as provided for in the Charter, and in that context consider ways in which it can interact effectively with the Security Council to prevent armed conflict (*A/55/985, p. 11, recommendations 1 and 2*).

My delegation further believes that the General Assembly, being the only universal and the most democratic organ of the United Nations, has a key role in structural prevention which, as the Secretary-General's report states, consists of measures to ensure that crises do not arise in the first place or do not recur. This also requires addressing the root causes of tension or conflict, and inasmuch as the root or underlying causes of conflict are attributed to poverty, the lack of economic progress, human rights abuses, the absence of justice, and competition over economic resources, it is clear that both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council have important roles to play in initiating and coordinating United Nations conflict prevention activities, especially those of a long-term nature. The Security Council has a key role to play, especially in the implementation of provisions of Chapter VI of the Charter and in operational conflict prevention measures responding to immediate crises.

We also attach great importance to the Secretary-General's preventive role as stated in his recommendation 9. Preventive diplomacy and the use of moral authority remain key conflict prevention activities of the Secretary-General.

A coordinated and coherent approach to conflict prevention is necessary also in view of the limited resources and multiple competing demands within the United Nations. Through effective coordination among the principal organs, we should be in a position to answer basic questions such as where tensions are likely to escalate into armed conflict, when the United Nations should become involved, and what measures are available to the United Nations to address a particular situation.

We should also distinguish conflict prevention measures from those of conflict management, peacekeeping, post-conflict peace-building and nation-building. Although in the real world it is difficult to compartmentalize those activities, that remains necessary, conceptually speaking, in order to ensure effective allocation of resources and the coherence of United Nations conflict prevention operations. Conflict prevention should therefore not be a catch-all term if it is to remain a viable concept. What may be important is to see how United Nations prevention activities in a particular situation can be enhanced by or coordinated with other United Nations activities such as post-conflict peace-building and development assistance programmes.

We have read part two of the report with keen interest and wish to make the following initial observations. First, recommendation 12 calls for more active use of preventive deployment before the onset of conflict. The comparative advantage of preventive deployment as a tool of conflict prevention vis-à-vis other tools has not yet been confirmed empirically. However, encouraging individual Member States to undertake preventive deployment — as compared to the use of that tool by the Security Council or a regional organization sanctioned by the United Nations — may only exacerbate tensions.

Secondly, on disarmament, to which recommendations 14 and 15 refer, preventive action should, of course, focus on small arms and light weapons. But it should also attach equal if not greater importance to nuclear disarmament and to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which remain the greatest threat to international peace and security. A focus on biological and chemical weapons is also needed.

Thirdly, recommendation 28, on the involvement of the private sector, should in fact go beyond that sector's adoption of socially responsible practices. The private sector, as we are increasingly being made aware, has in certain instances helped fuel or even prolong conflicts by financially sustaining the antagonists or by contributing to the financial profitability of conflict. The private sector's role in conflict prevention should therefore be enhanced. Other actors, such as non-governmental organizations and civil society actors, should also be involved.

Fourthly, one area to consider in conflict prevention which we believe is relevant to potential conflicts both within and between States is the impact of intensified competition over mineral and other natural resources.

Fifthly, enhancing the analytical capacity of the United Nations is needed to effectively assess situations as they develop so as to determine the appropriate tools for preventing armed conflict.

Finally, we believe that the following principles should guide the conflict prevention activities of the United Nations. First, we should heed the Secretary-General's premise that the primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with national Governments and other local actors. United Nations-sponsored action therefore needs the active cooperation and consent of the Government or Governments concerned.

Secondly, conflict prevention should be viewed as a process aimed at addressing the conditions that can precipitate armed conflict. Because conditions vary, recognition of the diversity and complexity of the roots of conflicts is crucial.

Thirdly, conflict prevention activities by the United Nations should be sustainable; Member States should be prepared to sustain the price, politically and financially, especially if the goals of particular actions are expanded or intensified, as may be the case in structural prevention operations. However, United Nations conflict prevention as such should not become an open-ended exercise.

Fourthly, conflict prevention actions, whether of an operational or structural nature, should be sensitive not only to existing local conditions, but also to the historical and cultural contexts of a potential conflict. Particular situations are not static events but result from historical processes grounded in political, economic and social disputes. An historical approach could lead to a distorted understanding of the factors promoting conflict and thus limit the possibility of successful prevention.

We hope to continue further consideration of this document. In many ways, we think the Secretary-General's report could lay the foundation for the United Nations role in maintaining international peace and security in the twenty-first century.

Mr. Cappagli (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): May I first express the satisfaction of the Argentine delegation at the holding of this debate on the prevention of armed conflict. We hope and expect it will be the starting point for joint work by the various organs of this Organization. We should like to express our thanks to the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/55/985, and thank Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette for her eloquent presentation of the report.

Armed conflicts not only kill people, they also destroy a country's infrastructure, waste resources, wreak havoc in the lives of people, particularly women and children, severely affecting health and education. In other words, armed conflicts affect the very future of society. Thus, there is an urgent need to prevent them. It is clear that to prevent conflicts, we must understand the causes that spawn them. Naturally, this is quite complex because each conflict has its own unique features. However, that does lessen the usefulness of moving towards a consistent and coordinated common approach to dealing with all conflicts.

Given this scenario, it is a priority to develop a culture of conflict prevention based on coordination and cooperation among the Members of the Organization, its various organs and the regional organizations and arrangements, in order to enable us to develop and implement appropriate strategies.

We have no doubt that the closer cooperation and coordination of efforts between this Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council will prove broadly beneficial in this respect. The Secretary-General, in referring to the various responsibilities incumbent upon the principal organs of the United Nations, is exploring suitable approaches to carry out such coordination. His recommendations point towards working out a homogeneous approach designed to have the culture of prevention take root at

all levels and in all activities of this Organization. We feel this should be welcome.

The culture of prevention encompasses a vast number of components linked to the competencies of the principal organs of the United Nations. Among others, this includes preventive diplomacy, early warning, disarmament, demobilization, preventive missions, confidence-building measures and other measures that are described in detail in the Secretary-General's report. In other words, the essence of the culture of prevention is investing in the future, allowing us to move towards a comprehensive approach to dealing with the underlying causes of conflict and finding the best way of overcoming them.

For a culture of prevention to be successful, it must have two necessary components. The first of these is financial resources to move forward with these measures. With that in mind, we once again welcome the contributions made thus far to the Trust Fund for Preventive Action, and we exhort all to continue contributing to it. The second component is the real political will of those involved in a conflict to resolve it. Outsiders can do very little, no matter how good their intentions are. Nor can we fail to highlight the role played by the international tribunals as an element of deterrence by creating an awareness that impunity will no longer be tolerated. This role will be further refined once the Rome Statute enters into force.

For many years now, the Assembly has striven to prevent conflicts, among other ways, by holding debates and adopting decisions. What has been done to date, however, has not achieved the desired results. Thus, it is appropriate now to find better responses to these problems. The authority the General Assembly has for this purpose derives from the United Nations Charter itself. The United Nations must fully deal with the new trends on the international agenda and formulate a response to international threats to peace and security.

Therefore, on the basis of the idea that it is up to the United Nations to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, there can be no question that this Organization, through its various organs, has the moral and legal responsibility of preventing conflicts.

Mr. Navarrete (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Deputy Secretary-General for her brief introduction of the Secretary-General's report, which guides our debate. As I had the opportunity to express in an open meeting of the Security Council to examine the Secretary-General's report on prevention of armed conflict, my delegation believes that the important recommendations it contains deserve careful study on the part of all Member States of the Organization. Mexico therefore gives a special welcome to the holding of the plenary meetings of the General Assembly devoted to the study of this report, and thanks the President for convening them.

The concept of prevention is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and is found in its very first Article, which declares one of the Organization's purposes to be "to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace". It seems reasonable to suppose that those who wrote the San Francisco Charter held that prevention should be the pillar of the system of collective security. However, that goal has not been translated into action. As the report indicates, the international context in the second half of the century that has just drawn to a close led the Organization to dedicate itself to reacting to conflicts instead of preventing them. Given the international situation in the new century, the shift to a culture of prevention now being proposed by the Secretary-General has a solid basis in the Charter and will help to restore logic to the Organization's priorities.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The delegation of Mexico deems it fundamental for the General Assembly to make more active use of its Charter powers. The General Assembly must regain the central role assigned to it by the Charter, as was recognized by our heads of State and Government in the Millennium Declaration. In this respect, it should be recalled that the founders of the United Nations, guided by the principles of democracy and equality, granted very broad powers to the General Assembly, the most representative and universal body of the Organization. Under Article 10 of the Charter,

> "The General Assembly may discuss any questions or matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the present Charter."

It is therefore clear that the General Assembly is called upon to play a preponderant role in all spheres of

United Nations activity and thus especially, as the representative of the European Union pointed out in this debate, in the prevention of armed conflict. We urge the launching of a brainstorming exercise, on the basis of the proposals and recommendations of the Secretary-General, to strengthen the capacities of the General Assembly as a body for mediation and prevention.

It cannot be ignored that, in the maintenance of international peace and security, close cooperation between the General Assembly and the Security Council is indispensable. An initial step towards strengthening coordination between these organs, as the report suggests, would be to increase consultations between their Presidents, not necessarily at fixed intervals, but rather as frequently as circumstances may require. This measure, though apparently modest, could prove useful in allowing the Council to draw on the views of the other Members of the United Nations in whose name it acts.

It is becoming ever more necessary clearly to delimit the scope of the Security Council's competence vis-à-vis the General Assembly. In recent years, in its desire comprehensively and sustainably to settle disputes that have threatened peace, the Council has acted in areas outside its competence. We must strive to ensure that the powers of each organ are respected, while strengthening cooperation between them.

It is obvious that, if a conflict is to be prevented, its root causes must be removed. These causes are, without question, diverse and multifaceted. There can be no doubt, however, that — over and above oppression and the lack of democracy — poverty, underdevelopment and hopelessness within the affected populations are among the most recurrent causes of conflict. Two days ago in Mexico, when the most recent *Human Development Report* was released by the United Nations Development Programme, President Vicente Fox warned that poverty, injurious and shameful to the societies it afflicts, is a source of instability on the international scene. For all these reasons, it is easy to conclude that issues and actions of prevention must be at the core of the work of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

We must enhance the efficacy of the relevant bodies in this field, over and above the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, with the participation of the Bretton Woods institutions. We need to launch large-scale actions that will allow us to address the root causes of conflicts and thus to prevent their eruption.

That is why the International Conference on Financing for Development is closely linked to the broad effort to build this culture of prevention. At that gathering, we will continue to seek to forge a great global alliance to promote development that will lead to new and more effective forms of cooperation for general and shared progress and to a new way of jointly managing globalization to the benefit of all. Development and democracy are, without question, powerful instruments for conflict prevention.

The arms race is another source of conflict. The very existence of nuclear weapons is a serious threat to peace and security, as pointed out a few moments ago by the representative of the Philippines. Mexico will continue to urge the adoption of measures to further the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; to push for the universalization and full effectiveness of the various international treaties in this arena; and to promote the negotiation of new bilateral and multilateral accords geared towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. We must continue to move towards the agreed goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

The use of small arms and light weapons in recent conflicts has also wrought massive damage and taken a deeply regrettable toll in innocent human lives. At the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, Mexico will do its utmost to ensure the adoption of an effective programme of action to prevent, combat and eradicate the manufacture of and illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons.

Full respect for human rights, the fight against the scourge of drugs and the campaign against organized transnational crime are further fundamental components of a culture of peace. That is equally true of the struggle against impunity, a priority that is fully shared by the Government of Mexico.

The Secretary-General's efforts to develop and promote a culture of prevention deserve our full support. We must all persevere in the determination to make the United Nations capable of successfully meeting the challenges it faces in the maintenance of

international peace and security, above all through the effective prevention of conflicts.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to express my delegation's gratitude for the holding of a debate of the General Assembly to consider the Secretary-General's report on the prevention of armed conflict, in document A/55/985. This format allows all interested Member States to voice their views on the contents of and recommendations contained in that document.

On 21 June, Colombia, along with other Members, participated in the open debate held by the Security Council to consider that report. On that occasion, our statement referred exclusively to the recommendations put to that organ. Today, we wish to offer some preliminary reactions to the remainder of the recommendations which the Secretary-General has submitted for our consideration.

States bear the primary responsibility for conflict prevention. National Governments and local authorities are called upon to respond properly and in a timely fashion to the political, economic, social and humanitarian circumstances that have the potential to lead to armed conflict or to the intensification of an ongoing conflict. That is the fundamental requirement that should, on the one hand, underlie any activity undertaken in this regard by the international community, including the United Nations system, and, on the other, guarantee that legitimately elected local and national authorities define the direction of and the priorities for conflict prevention.

Over and above the discussion about which actors are responsible for conflict prevention — and there appears to be no disagreement on that issue — is the question of what conflict prevention is and what it is not. The concept is so wide-ranging and comprehensive that by simply playing with words, the members of the international community could apply the term "conflict prevention" to what it used to call humanitarian assistance, assistance for development, public health programmes, education projects for young people and so forth.

We therefore believe that it is up to the General Assembly to make a real effort to define conflict prevention. The facets of this concept are so many, its possibilities so varied and the actors implementing it so numerous that it is imperative to define the reach and scope of conflict prevention. Is it a new model of international cooperation for development? Is it a concept that applies only to societies living through conflict situations or that may possibly be affected by one? How do we bring into conflict prevention the regions or nations whose people live in peace? Were past achievements by States in the area of development a matter of conflict prevention? There are many questions, and we must urgently begin a frank, open-ended and productive international dialogue that can bring States and the international community together in developing a culture of prevention.

There are several areas of work where the General Assembly has taken a course that must be incorporated into our discussion. The strengthening of the machinery for the peaceful settlement of disputes, envisaged in Chapter VI of the Charter, is one such example. Another is the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, whose implications have been very positive at the regional and national level in several countries, including, of course, Colombia. Also in this context, the Millennium Declaration provides a road map that, if followed, could contribute to conflict prevention. All of these efforts, in which the General Assembly has played a central role, must be brought together, and perhaps the President of the General Assembly, or his successor, will have to lead an intensive effort to get this harmonization process under way.

We strongly support the intensification of the dialogue between the General Assembly and the Security Council. There are political limitations on the Security Council in advancing a true culture of prevention, and the Assembly might provide the natural means of closing that gap. Such a dialogue, the format and modalities of which remain to be explored, might serve as a response to the Secretary-General's recommendation that the General Assembly make more frequent use of the powers conferred on it by Articles 10, 11 and 14 of the Charter, as well as his recommendation relating to the need to give thought to the advantages of a culture of prevention in the long term.

We agree that the Economic and Social Council should devote its high-level segment to the question of the causes of conflict and the role that development plays in promoting a culture of prevention in the long term. The impact would be maximized if we took this opportunity to crystallize in concrete results the dialogue between the Economic and Social Council and

the Bretton Woods institutions, the donor countries, the regional financing banks and, of course, the United Nations funds and programmes. Our goal must be none other than that of unifying and harmonizing activities through which the international community supports national efforts for conflict prevention.

In this context, we must stress the importance of the development of conflict prevention. That is why it is essential for us to strengthen programmes of assistance for development in the United Nations system and, in particular, to ensure that the donor countries abide by their commitments for achieving the stipulated objectives relating to official development assistance.

One of the most important recommendations put forward by the Secretary-General is that relating to the International Court of Justice. That is a United Nations body whose binding jurisdiction Colombia has accepted since 1932. We firmly support the Court as a natural mechanism for the peaceful resolution of disputes among States, and we invite all States to accept its jurisdiction. We have taken note of the designation of the Department of Political Affairs as a focal point for conflict prevention. However, this is an issue that we must examine very carefully, given the possible institutional implications that might result from having the Department for Political Affairs develop the capacity to exercise its own responsibilities in that area, especially when this involves prevention in connection with predominantly political subjects, which usually go hand in hand with very deep-rooted national sensibilities.

In conclusion, I should like to add my country's voice to the urgent call of the Secretary-General for us to intensify our collective efforts in the disarmament arena, particularly by completely halting the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and their availability in conflict situations; in renewing our commitment to protecting human rights and ensuring the full effectiveness of international humanitarian law; in responding to the needs of our children and teenagers affected by armed conflict; in including a gender perspective in our efforts; and in responding to the global problem of drugs, while fully adhering to the principle of shared responsibility.

Mr. Mladenović (Yugoslavia): The Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has studied the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the prevention of armed conflict (A/55/985). In our opinion, the report provides a very good basis for consideration of this important issue. For the first time, the mandates and roles of the principal organs of the United Nations and its specialized agencies and programmes in the prevention of armed conflict, as well as previous practice and experience in the field, are described in a systematic way. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia fully supports the main message of the report: the pledge of the Secretary-General to move the United Nations from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention.

The prevention of conflict — armed conflict in particular — lies at the core of the concept of collective security, and in that sense it is the cornerstone of the United Nations. Regrettably, that concept has not always been fully respected, primarily because of the lack of confidence that plagued the United Nations during the cold war. The passing of the cold war and, in particular, the advent of the new millennium, seem to have brought about much more favourable conditions for the United Nations to carry out a fundamental change in its work. In order to address new and ever more diverse challenges in the years to come, the world Organization should reform and strengthen the roles of its principal organs as provided for by the Charter, and develop and diversify cooperation with regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and others.

We are of the opinion that the concept of prevention, in order to be successful, should be very broadly based. It should not limit itself to the prevention of armed conflict alone; instead, it should also address the causes of negative developments that could lead to tensions, misunderstandings and disputes in the broadest sense of the word.

Of course, the primary responsibility lies with States, as sovereign subjects of international law, because their agreement is crucial for decision-making within international organizations. Furthermore, many disputes emerge first as consequences of internal problems that are subsequently internationalized as they become threats to a region and to the international community.

However, one must not lose sight of the responsibility of the international community, primarily of the United Nations and regional organizations,

particularly in matters that may threaten international peace and security. The Security Council has primary responsibility, provided for by the Charter, for safeguarding peace and security. The role and responsibilities of other principal organs of the United Nations — the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice and the Secretary-General — must not be disregarded either. We consider that the role and activities of these organs should continue to be studied and developed in accordance with the Charter, so as to make them even more effective.

This is very important if we want the United Nations to act consistently and coherently and to fulfil, in conjunction with other international actors, its irreplaceable role, particularly in the field of conflict prevention.

On the other hand, these efforts should not be inconsistent with the provisions of the Charter and of international law, especially if mandatory measures under Chapter VII of the Charter — such as sanctions or the use of force against United Nations Member States — are considered. This is the only safeguard against arbitrary actions that take us away from the international legal order and the Charter.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia supports the consideration of the prevention of armed conflict, as it itself has had serious problems because of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia — lengthy sanctions, civil wars in its environment, the situation in Kosovo and Metohija, the 1999 aerial bombardment, and the crisis in the ground safety zone in parts of southern Serbia. Because of the policy of the former regime and wrong moves by the international community in the last decade, proper and timely measures were not taken to prevent the transformation of problems into conflicts and, eventually, into armed conflicts. The new Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has addressed itself, with utmost dedication and responsibility, to resolving all contentious issues, especially those that may pose a threat to the region.

Recently the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was faced with the problem of infiltration by Albanian terrorists and extremists from Kosovo and Metohija into the ground safety zone in three municipalities in southern Serbia, who carried out armed attacks, including attacks with heavy weaponry, against the Yugoslav security forces and the local population. In order to prevent the broadening of the conflict and to resolve the crisis, the Governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its constituent Republic of Serbia prepared a plan and a programme. They provided for the solution of the crisis by peaceful means, with the participation of the representatives of the Albanian ethnic community and the support of the international community. The aim was to solve the problem in a democratic and transparent way.

Of crucial importance was to re-establish security in that part of the Yugoslav territory and to preserve and develop its multi-ethnic nature, with full respect for the human and civil rights of all citizens, including members of the Albanian ethnic community. In a word, we are determined to build a multi-ethnic society that is based on democracy and economic growth.

So far, the first two phases of the plan and programme have been successfully completed. Terrorist activities have ceased, and terrorists have been disarmed and have withdrawn from the area. This has created conditions for the Yugoslav security forces to take control of this part of southern Serbia and normalize life in the municipalities. The implementation of the third phase is under way, which provides for the integration of the Albanian ethnic community in Yugoslav political and social systems and the creation of conditions for an accelerated economic and social development of the region.

We believe that these actions provide a good example of how a Government, in cooperation with the international community, can act successfully and prevent a basically internal dispute from transforming itself into an armed conflict which may threaten peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Bennouna (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): The report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict dated 7 June 2001 (A/55/985) is of crucial importance to the credibility and future of our Organization.

Indeed, in his report, Mr. Kofi Annan reminds us that, at the beginning of this new millennium, the essential objective and primary mission of the United Nations is "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

Every effort should be made, therefore, to prevent and avert all types of threats to peace, whatever their origin and whatever the reasons and motivations

behind them. To this end, we must first of all draw from the arsenal of measures for the pacific settlement of disputes, as enshrined in Chapter VI of the Charter and, more specifically, in Article 33.

From this point of view, the Kingdom of Morocco would like to recall what the jurisprudence of the International Court of Justice has reaffirmed in numerous judgements and advisory opinions, namely the existence in international law of a veritable duty for all the parties to a conflict to negotiate. That obligation to negotiate implies that all of the parties should engage in good faith in the negotiation process and endeavour to overcome their differences in order to achieve a lasting solution, taking into account the different positions.

From this perspective, the role of the Secretary-General is of crucial importance in the area of prevention, by assisting the parties to meet while designating a third party to verify whether they acted in good faith in implementing their obligation to negotiate. The Secretary-General, who personifies the Organization and the international community, is also the person best suited to suggest platforms for agreement based on justice and equity.

Therefore, we deem it advisable to strengthen the functions of the highest official of the United Nations in the matter of good offices, mediation and conciliation, in relation, of course, to the other principal organs of our Organization.

Besides, the work of the Secretariat and the studies that it can carry out provide us with information about the real causes of conflicts, be they injustices, social and economic inequalities, humanitarian questions or violations of the fundamental rights of the human person.

We are convinced that appropriate responses to these issues or to the issues at stake are the best way to prevent situations from deteriorating and disputes from intensifying, which could endanger international peace and security.

The Kingdom of Morocco is convinced that in all attempts to settle disputes, one must avoid any confusion between the political issues under discussion and humanitarian problems, to which urgent solutions must be found in order to alleviate the suffering of the people. Where fundamental human rights are at stake, we cannot hold issues hostage as bargaining chips in political negotiations of any kind.

In all prevention endeavours, psychological factors play a role, especially when systematic defiance and suspicion take root in conflicts that have lasted for years, if not for decades. It is thus of primary importance for the United Nations to put before the parties a number of measures designed to build mutual confidence and to open the way to a new climate of cooperation.

Measures aimed at re-establishing confidence begin — and this is very important — by learning a new language and by the re-establishment of a frank dialogue among the parties. The United Nations alone can enable this genuine change to take place because of its legitimacy and credibility.

It is clear, as the Secretary-General's report stresses so pertinently, that there can be no sustainable development when there exists a devastating climate of conflict or of potential conflict persists, eating away at the social body like a cancer.

The United Nations must assist the parties by deploying the entire range of prevention measures; but at the same time the parties concerned should be encouraged to cooperate in the economic area at the very time they are engaged in negotiations to find a political solution to their disputes.

If it is true that the primary responsibility for prevention lies with the national Governments and with the local actors, at the same time it is the responsibility of our Organization to support and guide their efforts in the right direction. Morocco is convinced that it is only in this way that the United Nations can teach and promote progressively the culture of prevention that the Secretary-General is calling for so strongly.

There should be reconciliation among the people of a nation, because as the philosopher Paul Ricoeur rightly said, a nation cannot be indefinitely in conflict with itself. A people must also reconcile itself with the outside world by overcoming crises arising from situations in which it has been involved.

As the poet Saint-John Perse told us, ripening civilizations do not die from the pangs of autumn; they merely change. It is with these words of hope that I am going to end this brief statement in which I have tried to get to the essence of the question of prevention in

the hopeful knowledge that there is always light at the end of the tunnel.

Mr. Wang Yingfan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank you, Sir, for presiding over this meeting to review the report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict.

The prevention of armed conflict involves political, economic, social, disarmament and other factors. This makes it both very timely and necessary for it to be reviewed by the General Assembly, the most representative body of the United Nations. At the same time, the Chinese delegation endorses the President's proposal that the report be sent to other relevant bodies of the United Nations system for review, so as to pool wisdom and resources from all sides.

The prevention of armed conflict is not a new concept. In a sense, the United Nations itself has been a product of the prevention of armed conflict. In the past half century — thanks to the unremitting efforts of all Member States — the United Nations has played a great role in preventing the outbreak and escalation of armed conflict in certain regions. Since the end of the Second World War, the international community has effectively prevented the outbreak of new world wars. The contribution of the United Nations in this area should be recognized.

Since the early 1990s, this issue has occupied an increasingly important position on the United Nations agenda. As an important effort in this field, Secretary-General Kofi Annan submitted a report in 1998 on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. Thereafter, the General Assembly established a Working Group on the basis of that report.

The present report of the Secretary-General focuses on the important role of the United Nations in the prevention of armed conflict and represents a vigorous effort to strengthen the leading role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. Of course, we cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that in today's world partial armed conflict continues to occur in quick succession in different regions or countries. The world is by no means peaceful. Member States and the United Nations still have a long way to go towards the successful prevention of armed conflict.

Towards the end of his report, in paragraph 162, the Secretary-General has asked a very sharp question: "Why is conflict prevention still so seldom practised, and why do we so often fail when there is a clear potential for a preventive strategy to succeed?" This is a question that Member States should really continue to think about in greater depth.

In the Security Council's recent review of the report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict, the Chinese delegation, in its analysis of the causes of armed conflict, made clear its views on ethnic conflicts and religious disputes in some countries and regions, and it emphasized the importance of promoting the democratization of State-to-State relations and strictly following the basic norms guiding such relations. Today I wish to make three points.

First, the Secretary-General has indicated in his report that equitable and sustainable development plays an important role in averting armed conflict and that some of the poorest societies are either on the verge of or embroiled in armed conflict. We cannot ignore the fact that most of the current conflicts have occurred in economically underdeveloped countries or regions. The constraints imposed by severe poverty on economic development and social progress in some developing countries, combined with other factors, such as ethnic and territorial dispute, have caused disturbances, and even armed conflict, in these countries. In an increasingly globalized economy the gap between the rich and the poor in the whole world has become ever wider, and many developing countries have been marginalized in the tide of globalization. Therefore, the long-term goal of preventing armed conflict cannot be achieved without a real solution to the question of the economic development of the developing countries. The realization of the grand development objectives laid down in the Millennium Declaration will undoubtedly be a strong guarantee for the success of conflict prevention.

The Chinese delegation supports the call made by the Secretary-General to the international community, and the developed countries in particular, to fulfil their pledge to provide development aid to developing countries and help them out of poverty, so as to make more substantial contributions to the realization of the objectives set forth in the Millennium Declaration. The United Nations should play a larger role in promoting the establishment of an open, transparent and non-

discriminatory international financial and trade system and in ensuring that the developing countries will be able to benefit from the system and participate in the decision-making process on an equal footing with others.

Secondly, the Secretary-General has also talked in his report about the relationship between disarmament and conflict prevention. The United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held this week, is an important event in the field of international arms control. Facts have shown that the illicit trade in and transfer of small arms and light weapons has exacerbated armed conflicts in some regions and complicated the post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building process in some countries.

The Chinese delegation maintains that stronger practical disarmament measures should be taken, and the illicit trade in and transfer of small arms and light weapons should be curbed, so as to prevent regional armed conflict and support post-conflict peace-building. We hope that a programme of action will be adopted by the General Assembly to provide guidance for specific activities in this field.

We all know that small arms and light weapons have a lot to do with conflict prevention. But what about large arms and heavy weapons and weapons of mass destruction? Obviously, these are questions that the international community must take seriously.

Thanks to the long and unremitting efforts of the international community, relevant agreements and conventions have been reached in the field of arms control and disarmament, and they have made important contributions to the maintenance of a global strategic balance and global stability. So as to safeguard this hard-won balance and stability, the international community should now make a concerted effort to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and a new round of the arms race caused by unilateralism.

Thirdly, because the world is diverse so must be the causes of armed conflict. Therefore, it is impossible to find a single formula for prevention. Since the financial crises in some countries and regions, the international community has come to understand that different approaches must be taken to financial crises in different countries, because of their differing situations. Similarly, the causes of the failure or unsatisfactory results of conflict prevention operations may also be found in their mistaken approaches. This point of view should be further explored.

The prevention of armed conflict is a comprehensive and important issue. The proposals and views put forward by the Secretary-General in his report need to be considered, discussed, examined and reviewed in depth by Member States, different bodies within the United Nations system and all sides concerned. It is highly necessary that the United Nations draw lessons and accumulate experiences from its practice of conflict prevention, so as to work out effective strategies, ways and measures for the prevention of armed conflict and to continue to deepen the efforts of the United Nations in this field.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): Since we are meeting in this smaller room, rather than in the big Hall of the General Assembly, I hope this means that there will be a greater meeting of minds on this issue.

Conflict prevention is like motherhood. Everybody worships it; nobody opposes it. But unfortunately, conflict prevention does not come naturally and easily like motherhood. This is not a boulder that rolls downhill. Instead, conflict prevention is a huge boulder that we have to move uphill with great effort. And often it slides backwards with disastrous consequences. Witness, for example, the spectacular failure of the Security Council mission that diverted itself from its mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to try to prevent the resumption of hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea in May 2000. Till today, the Security Council has never tried to analyse why this mission failed. If we really want to know why conflict prevention is difficult, we should, as a case study, analyse the failure of this high-level Security Council mission.

To be fair to that Security Council mission, it may have been a mission impossible. As former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans noted in his essay "Preventive Action and Conflict Resolution",

> "The last minute, however, will rarely be the optimal time to intervene in a dispute: in fact, the point at which a dispute is just about to erupt into conflict is close to being the most difficult at which the international community could seek to intervene. The dynamics of escalation are usually so strong at this point that it is very difficult to stop or reverse the situation."

Clearly, therefore, if conflicts are to be prevented, they have to be prevented at an early stage and probably through a multidimensional process. Fortunately for us, there is no shortage of academic studies in these areas. Several organizations have done intensive studies on the ways and means of preventing conflict. For example, there is the famous Carnegie Commission study, which, as everyone here knows, is mentioned several times in the Secretary-General's report. Indeed, in the annex to the report one can find at least 62 bibliographical references to other studies. For our debate today, the Secretary-General has, as usual, presented a thoughtful and informative report on conflict prevention. There is much in the report that we should study and reflect on. The curious thing about the state of mankind today is that we are never short of the right words to analyse problems. But our deeds have great difficulty matching our words.

Just look at the United Nations own record on conflict prevention in the last 15 years. In 1987 the United Nations established the Office for Research and the Collection of Information to help with conflict prevention. In January 1992 the Security Council met at the summit level to consider, among other things, conflict prevention. But it is chastening to note that two major conflicts — in Rwanda and in the Balkans — occurred almost immediately after these United Nations initiatives. The fuller statistics tell an even larger story. The European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation states in its annual report that more than 3.5 million people have been killed and 24 million internally displaced by intra-State conflicts since 1990. Indeed, 37 major armed conflicts were waged in 32 locations between 1995 and 1997, and of the 25 major armed conflicts fought in 1997, 24 were intra-State, or internal, wars. All those deaths occurred after previous United Nations discussions of preventive diplomacy and in the wake of a wealth of conflict prevention studies. How, then, do we ensure that our discussions in the Assembly today will not prove not equally futile?

Clearly, everyone in this Chamber will agree that the violence of man against man is morally wrong and spiritually abhorrent. But, apart from the moral dimension, the Secretary-General's report has, as usual, injected a dose of common sense and has pointed out the economic costs of conflict. It notes, for example, that the study carried out by the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict estimated that on the seven major interventions of the 1990s — Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, the Persian Gulf, Cambodia and El Salvador — $200 billion was spent. Conflict prevention could have saved the international community $130 billion. Everybody, as we have heard in all the speeches thus far, also acknowledges that the United Nations has a central role to play in conflict prevention. Yet it is curious that each year the United Nations has difficulties raising $1 billion to meet its annual budget when effective action by the United Nations could save the international community $130 billion. Can someone explain the lack of common sense here?

More specifically, the Secretary-General's report also notes that General Romeo Dallaire had pointed out that the deployment of just 5,000 troops to Rwanda in April 1994 would have been sufficient to halt the genocide. The Carnegie Commission study has estimated that preventive action in Rwanda would have cost $1.3 billion but that the subsequent overall assistance to Rwanda in the wake of the genocide had a price tag of $4.5 billion. Unfortunately, that $4.5 billion could not bring back to life the 800,000 Rwandans who died in the genocide.

That remark on Rwanda is made in paragraph 3 of the Secretary-General's report. But what is sobering is that in paragraph 165, towards the end of the report, the Secretary-General notes that

> "Most of the factors that stopped the United Nations intervening to prevent genocide in Rwanda remain present today". (*A/55/985*)

Indeed, it is well known that many small countries, including for example Burundi, face the danger of equally violent conflict. It is clear that if the international community is judged by its deeds and not by its words, those deeds will show that it has not learned the lessons of Rwanda.

One key question we have to ask in this debate is a simple one. Who is responsible for preventing conflict? Article 1, paragraph 1, of the United Nations Charter broadly states that among the purposes of the United Nations is

> "to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace".

However, until we assign clear responsibilities, no one will take responsibility when conflicts break out. We therefore suggest that the time has come to do so.

In that regard, it is fortunate that both the Security Council and the General Assembly are debating the Secretary-General's report in close succession. By doing so, both are taking on responsibilities for conflict prevention. There are also, of course, other actors in the United Nations system, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, which also bear responsibility for the prevention of conflict. Unfortunately, the division of labour still needs to be clearly spelled out.

All the academic studies suggest that there are both immediate and structural causes for conflict. A simple division of labour would be for the Security Council to act at short notice to deal with imminent conflicts and for the General Assembly and its related organs to deal with structural causes. Each should be held accountable for its responsibilities. But the interesting question is who is accountable to whom?

Paragraph 1 of Article 24 of the Charter states that

> "In order to ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations, its Members confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf."

We should pay particular attention to two key phrases. First, we, the Members of the United Nations, have conferred — and I stress the word "conferred" — on the Security Council primary responsibility. Secondly, when the Security Council carries out its duties, it is acting on behalf of the members of the General Assembly. The ultimate responsibility for assessing the work of the Security Council therefore lies with the General Assembly.

The question here, therefore, is whether we, the Members of the United Nations represented in the General Assembly, have seriously reflected on the responsibilities that we have entrusted to the Security Council. Perhaps when the Security Council submits its annual report to the General Assembly, as required by paragraph 3 of Article 24, it should include a chapter indicating which conflicts were prevented and which it failed to prevent, and why.

But the Security Council does not have the mandate or the responsibility to address the underlying socio-economic causes of conflict. Clearly, as the Secretary-General pointed out in his seminal millennium report, entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century" (A/54/2000), global poverty is one of the underlying causes of conflict. It is well known that war among or between affluent developed societies has become a rarity. But, as five-sixths of the planet's citizens live outside those affluent and developed corners, they are not spared the ravages of conflict.

Ultimately, therefore, if we are serious about preventing conflict, the international community and the principal organs of the United Nations have an obligation to deal with the issues of global poverty. In that regard, let me just say that it was unfortunate that an effort to have a dialogue between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in the month of April during the British presidency of the Security Council was aborted. If we want to address the long-term causes of conflict, we need to have such dialogue between the Security Council and other United Nations bodies.

In conclusion, let us stress once again that conflict prevention is not easy. If we are truly serious about moving from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention, we should not only assign clearer responsibilities, but we should be prepared to accept them as well. The Secretary-General's call for greater coordination between the principal actors within the United Nations system and in the field of conflict prevention should also receive our fullest support. Ultimately, if another Rwanda occurs in the next 10 years we will have no one to blame but ourselves.

Mr. Sun (Republic of Korea): Let me begin by expressing my deep gratitude to the President of the General Assembly for convening these meetings on the prevention of armed conflict. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his enlightening and comprehensive report (*A/55/985*).

This is an opportune time for the General Assembly to address this important issue, as recent conflicts have underscored the need to develop a more effective preventive strategy. While a sense of national ownership is essential for the success of preventive measures, the United Nations has a unique and critical role to play in conflict prevention, as confirmed last year in the Millennium Declaration.

Effective conflict prevention is certainly a challenging and complex endeavour encompassing social, economic and political dimensions. In our view, the most effective preventive strategy is a comprehensive one that entails short-term and long-term measures to foster political dialogue, the rule of law, respect for human rights, socio-economic development and good governance.

My delegation shares the Secretary-General's commitment to moving from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. But while it is generally acknowledged that conflict prevention is far more cost-effective than post-conflict management in both human and financial terms, States are often wary of making present-day sacrifices for preventive efforts whose impact will not be apparent until well into the future.

I would like to take this opportunity to comment on some issues of particular importance to my delegation, many of which were raised in last month's Security Council open debate.

First, my delegation fully agrees with the Secretary-General's recommendations for strengthening the preventive capacities of, and improving coordination among, the principal United Nations organs. In particular, we support his suggestion that the General Assembly consider a more active use of its powers by developing recommendations for conflict prevention and drawing the Security Council's attention to situations that may pose a threat to international peace and security. We also believe that greater interaction between the General Assembly and the Security Council in the development of long-term conflict prevention and peace-building strategies would be of great value.

Secondly, recognizing that sustainable peace cannot be achieved without addressing the structural root causes of conflicts, my delegation supports a broader, more holistic approach to conflict prevention. Indeed, the most effective form of conflict prevention may well be the pursuit of sustainable development. As the Secretary-General noted, conflict prevention and sustainable development are mutually reinforcing activities; an investment in conflict prevention is essentially an investment in development, and vice versa. In this regard, enhanced cooperation within the United Nations system, particularly among the General Assembly, Security Council and Economic and Social Council, is critical.

Thirdly, recognizing that a stable social environment is key to preventing the outbreak or recurrence of conflicts, my delegation is in favour of devoting greater resources to United Nations humanitarian agencies and integrating preventive activities into their work in pre-crisis situations. In particular, we stress the need to safeguard the rights of women and children and mobilize international support for the fight against HIV/AIDS. My delegation is pleased that last month's special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS was a success, and looks forward to this September's special session on children. It is our hope that these events will give fresh impetus to United Nations humanitarian efforts.

Fourthly, given the multifaceted nature of today's conflicts, my delegation believes that a wide array of international actors, including non-governmental organizations, civil society and regional organizations, have a valuable role to play in conflict prevention. In particular, we encourage the United Nations to strengthen its relationship with regional and subregional organizations and pursue regional preventive strategies, as appropriate. Due to their proximity, regional and subregional organizations are often more attuned to the situation on the ground and can therefore develop effective institutional capacities for conflict prevention.

Fifthly, emphasis should be placed on an effective early warning mechanism, a more proactive use of preventive monitoring and preventive peacekeeping missions. The United Nations Preventive Deployment Force in Macedonia and the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic, both cited in the Secretary-General's report, are good examples of preventive deployment.

Lastly, we firmly support enhancing the traditional preventive role of the Secretary-General, as detailed in the Secretary-General's report. While we believe that the allocation of greater resources for these activities is necessary, my delegation also emphasizes the need to consider carefully their financial implications. In particular, we welcome the Secretary-General's intention to present periodic regional and subregional reports to the Security Council on potential threats to international peace and security.

We should bear in mind that the United Nations will not be able to fulfil its mandate for the maintenance of international peace and security

without strong political will on the part of the parties concerned. The principle and spirit of peaceful settlement of disputes enshrined in the United Nations Charter should be fully respected by all Member States. Parties directly involved in conflicts must take the initiative to first pursue dialogue and reconciliation, with the encouragement of the international community.

I wish to conclude by reiterating the intention of the Republic of Korea, a contributor to the Trust Fund for Preventive Action since 1997, to strongly support and firmly commit itself to the efforts of the United Nations and the international community to prevent armed conflicts.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.